

A CENTURY OF
DOCTRINAL REVISIONS

1890 - 1990

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by
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Introduction

What would have happened to the Mormon people if the 1890 Manifesto had not been issued? Would the Church have been destroyed, members killed, and the Priesthood of God obliterated? It is difficult to postulate on the probabilities, but it is not difficult to recognize the reality of what has actually happened in the past century.

The year 1890 was a turning point for Mormonism. It was even noted in prophecy. For example, Wilford Woodruff wrote in his journal:

Thus ends the year 1889, and the word of the Prophet Joseph Smith is beginning to be fulfilled that the whole nation would turn against Zion and make war upon the Saints. * * * 1890 will be an important year with the Latter-day Saints and the American nation. (Wilford Woodruff Journal, Dec. 31, 1889)

The Prophet Joseph referred to the year 1890 in a revelation he received April 1, 1843:

I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following: Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; . . . (D. & C. 130:14-15)

[2] Joseph was born in 1805 and by adding 85 years to this date, you arrive at 1890. If Joseph had lived that long, he probably would never have considered a Manifesto--thus opening the way for the Savior to come and rescue the Saints.

In February 1835 the Prophet said that "great things shall be accomplished" by the Elders ordained to the ministry, and they were to "go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh--even fifty-six years should wind up the scene."

(DHC 2:182) What scene was he referring to that was to be wound up about 1890-91?

Going back much further into history, this particular year was mentioned in another type of prophecy. It comes from the great pyramid of Giza in Egypt. President Anthony W. Ivins explained the accuracy of this prophetic pyramid:

More than ninety percent of the events chronicled, according to measurements <in this pyramid>, have already been fulfilled. (Conference Report, Oct. 3, 1926)

Apostle Orson Pratt provided a valuable scientific analysis of this "Bible in Stone":

Allowing one year to a cubic inch, it gives the sixth of April, 1830, as the exact time, corresponding to the upper edge of the "Grand Steps". This points out the very period of the time when the Church was organized.... (Conference Report, April 7, 1880, p. 87)

Pratt went on with another interesting observation:

[3] Sixty-one cubit inches are measured off, from that point in a horizontal direction, until you come to the great impending wall, the end of the gallery. What that means, I do not pretend to know. * * * Sixty-one years from the organization of the Church brings us, according to pyramidal testimony, to the end of something. (Ibid., p. 87)

What "impending wall" came in 1891--and what ended? Perhaps it was the end of the original social, political and economic policies of Mormonism. Keith Norman noted this when he wrote:

It marks the beginning of an about-face which drastically altered the character of the church. * * * Within a few years of 1890, not only polygamy, but theocracy and communitarianism, the three most distinct practices of nineteenth-century Mormonism were relegated to the heroic past.... ("How Long, O Lord? The Delay of the Parousia in Mormonism," paper by Keith E. Norman, July 1982)

It was at this time that a most interesting observation was made by the great Count Leo Tolstoi, the Russian author, statesman, and philosopher:

If Mormonism is able to endure, unmodified, until it reaches the third and fourth generation, it is destined to become the greatest power the world has ever known. (Imp. Era, Feb. 1939, p. 94)

However, instead of remaining unmodified and unchanged, the Church gradually compromised and gave up many of its principles and doctrines, a few of which will be discussed in this paper.

[4] The U.S. Government enacted many laws against plural marriage in their efforts to stop that practice, but why did the Church also give up its political and economic practices? Why did they give the enemy even more than it asked for? Historian Leonard Arrington perhaps gave the best clue to this mystery:

National leaders and church leaders are said to have entered into a "compact". We do not know whether such a "compact" was actually made, but at least the agreement and actions which it is said to have involved did take place. In the supposed "compact", national leaders are said to have promised statehood for Utah provided three things were done: (1) plural marriage was abandoned; (2) the church political party was dissolved; and (3) the church dissolve its relations with the economy. ("Religion and Economics in Mormon History", BYU Studies 3:31-32)

History has shown that these three conditions were soon complied with, resulting in Utah statehood in 1896. Let's take a closer look at the abandonment of these three major principles and practices:

1. The Kingdom of God (political)
2. The United Order (economic)
3. Plural Marriage (social)

[5] The Kingdom of God

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...." (Matt. 6:33) If this kingdom is so important, then certainly we should know exactly what it is. Unfortunately, there are many varying definitions, and it seems to be the last thing people are seeking for. Even within the LDS Church, there are differing conceptions of the Kingdom of God.

Dr. Hyrum Andrus, in describing three important phases of the Kingdom of God in Mormon history, states that "all this has escaped the student of Mormonism" and these facts "are of such importance that every student of the Church should become acquainted with them." (Flyleaf to Joseph Smith and World Government) Andrus clearly defines these three phases:

1. The Prophet <Joseph Smith> included within his concept of the Kingdom of God, the development of a political government that would be administered under the direction of the Priesthood of Zion. The Kingdom of God, then, was considered as something more than the Church. * * *

2. Joseph Smith laid the foundation of the Kingdom of God in its political, as well as in its religious, sphere. * * * and organized it in its embryonic form upon the earth.

3. * * * It was this body, not the Church, that carried out the Exodus <to the Salt Lake Valley>. After locating the Saints in the Great Basin, this political body then organized and incorporated itself into the State of Deseret. (Ibid., flyleaf)

[6] The political strength and influence of the Mormons have always been resented by the rest of the nation. As the Prophet Joseph Smith began his campaign for the presidency of the United States, he said, "When I get hold of the eastern papers and see how popular I am, I am afraid myself that I shall be elected." (DHC 6:243)

He was not alone in these concerns. Helen Mar Whitney wrote:

It was the popularity of Joseph as candidate for the Presidency, and the power and influence that the Mormon people were gaining, that created a feeling of fear among the apostates and corrupt politicians, and . . . they were determined to put an end to his earthly career. ("Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo," Women's Exponent 11:114)

And so they did. However, Joseph--knowing he would be rejected along with his political ideals--established a foundation to the Kingdom of God in 1843. But after the death of the Prophet, the politicians continued to harass the Saints. President Buchanan sent an army out to the Salt Lake Valley to crush the Mormon powers, but to no avail. Abraham Lincoln also feared the political power of the Mormons, and in a letter to a Protestant minister, he wrote:

Two cankers are biting the very entrails of the United States today: the Romish and the Mormon priests. Both are equally at work to form a people of the most abject, ignorant and fanatical slaves, who will recognize no other but their supreme pontiffs. The Mormon and Jesuit priests are equally and uncompromising enemies of our constitution and our laws.... (Fifty Years in the Church of Rome, Pastor Chinequy, p. 488)

[7] Lincoln also called polygamy one of the "twin relics of barbarism" and issued the anti-polygamy territorial law against the Mormons. Interestingly, he was "tipped" from his seat in government to "die an untimely death", according to a prophecy and a cursing from Heber C. Kimball upon those who try to "destroy the Kingdom of God". (JD 5:133)

Lincoln began the first of many laws against the Mormons, but in reality it was just the means of destroying the Mormon political and economic systems. Polygamy was merely the handle to create public sentiment against them, justifying the creation of these laws.

Over 20 anti-polygamy bills were introduced into the 47th Congress. The Edmunds Bill passed and denied any Mormon voting privileges. It also denied them jury duty. And they could not hold any public office. This is what the gentiles really desired.

The 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Bill was ostensibly directed toward eliminating polygamy, but it also dissolved the Perpetual Emigration Fund; it broke up the United Order; it destroyed the Church People's Party; it disfranchised the Church; it confiscated Church property; and it ultimately killed the Kingdom of God. Now the Saints were left to join up with the Democrats or the Republicans.

Then, for the next 100 years, the concept and organization of the Kingdom of God changed, as noted by comparing the following comments:

Brigham Young said this kingdom "will yet give laws to every nation that exists upon the earth." (JD 11:275) While many years later James E. Talmage said, "The Kingdom of God asserts no claim to temporal rule over nations...." (Jesus the Christ, p. 788)

[8] George Q. Cannon stated, "The Kingdom of God is a separate organization from the Church of God." (DHC 7:382) Then in recent years

Bruce R. McConkie said, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it is now constituted is the Kingdom of God on earth. * * * The Church and Kingdom are one and the same." (Mormon Doctrine, p. 415)

Thus, the definition of the Kingdom of God has evolved from being a powerful political government among men to being limited to just the spiritual church.

The United Order

When the LDS Church was less than a year old, the Lord directed the Saints to "let every man esteem his brother as himself" because "if ye are not one, ye are not mine." (D & C 38:24, 27)

In 1832 the Lord revealed additional information on the "permanent and everlasting" nature of the United Order:

That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things. (D & C 78:5-6)

This doctrine and practice of the United Order is eternal. Contrary to popular opinion, it has never been done away. It is the only law which abolishes the social evils that accompany inequality.

Three years before Brigham Young died, the Lord was still commanding the Saints to organize themselves into the United Order:

[9] Thus saith the Lord unto my servant Brigham, Call ye, call ye, upon the inhabitants of Zion, to organize themselves in the Order of Enoch, in the New and Everlasting Covenant, according to the Order of Heaven, for the furtherance of my kingdom upon the earth, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the salvation of the living and the dead.

You can accommodate yourselves by calling this a new revelation, if you choose; it is no new revelation, but it is the express word and will of God to this people. (JD 17:154, Aug. 1874)

During Brigham Young's administration, over 100 different United Orders were established, but only a few survived and prospered for any length of time. The weaknesses and traditions of men were too much to overcome! The tendency is to eagerly seek individual riches.

J. Golden Kimball once said, "If I had a million dollars, I'd be the most popular man in the Church; but I haven't got it! Damn it!" He experienced the error of such a philosophy when he invested everything he owned into a Canadian land scheme, thinking it would make him extremely rich. When it failed, he explained:

And thus we were prevented from chasing the golden calf. Moral: Don't set your heart upon riches, don't speculate, and don't go into debt. (Book of Mormons, Wagoner and Walker, p. 142)

There is nothing evil in the gaining of riches because the United Order was intended to make the people rich and insure that there were

"no poor among them". The distinction is in how the riches are obtained and the purpose for which they are used. Brigham observed:

If we are the people of God, we are to be the richest people on the earth, and these riches [10] are to be held in God, not in the devil. * * * I am ashamed to see the poverty that exists among the Latterly Saints. They ought to be worth millions and millions, and millions on millions, where they are not worth a dollar. (JD 17:44)

Today most Mormons are struggling for minimum wages--and feel grateful for that. But that's not what was intended in the early days of the Church. Brigham Young explained that the Prophet "Joseph said to the Elders, `Never put forth your hands again to build up a gentile city.'" (Teachings of Brigham Young, 3:276) But we continue to labor economically for gentile federal notes, in a gentile social order, under the gentile political system. We are further away from the United Order than ever before.

But from our youth, we are programmed this way. Our high schools and colleges teach us financial "success" methods of how to get rich. Countless books are available on financial schemes for getting wealthy. But these methods seem to be driving the Saints further and further away from the United Order.

Under our present system we are subject to all the inflations, depressions, high income taxes, real estate taxes and horrible interest rates! It is a system devised to keep people poor. This may be the fulfillment of a prophecy of Brigham Young:

If we are not disposed to enter the Order, the curse of God will come upon this people. I cannot help it. (Annals of the Southern Utah Mission, Book B, p. 218)

One of the greatest threats and fears of the future is the prophetic collapse of the gentile money system. So especially now we should have serious concern for the re-establishment of the United Order.

[11] Plural Marriage

In 1843 the Prophet Joseph called the High Council of Nauvoo together to see if they would accept the revelation on plural marriage. Thomas Grover, a bodyguard of the Prophet, wrote the following:

Brother Hyrum was called upon to read the revelation. He did so, and after the reading said, "Now you that believe this revelation and go forth and obey the same shall be saved, and you that reject it shall be damned." We saw this prediction verified in less than one week. * * * From that time forward there was a very strong division in the High Council. (Historical Record 6:227)

This doctrinal schizophrenia persisted. Church leaders were publically denying plural marriage while at the same time they were living it. Ten years later the Church accepted it but 80% to 90% never entered into the principle during the next 40 years. When the Manifesto was issued, this division between the rank and file began again, but now it grew to visible proportions. Some authorities were endorsing and

practicing it, while others were discouraging and denying it. Nearly a dozen manifestos and public denials were issued up to 1933.

Some authorities really meant it this time, and they took every effort to cleanse the Church of polygamy. Test oaths and other tactics were used to flush out the polygamists. And today there continues to be a vibrant warfare between Mormons who won't give up plural marriage and the Mormons who are trying to destroy it.

It is interesting to note that the practice of polygamy is legal in California--a state that contains more Mormons than the state of Utah. Regarding personal relationships, they have a law stating that anything between [12] consenting adults is legal. And yet the main reason given for discontinuing plural marriage was because it was against the law of the land. Samuel W. Taylor poses this categorical question:

I wonder what today's Mormons would do if the repeal of sex laws swept away the only reason for not obeying Section 132? While my crystal ball license has expired, I expect that regardless of Section 132, the Saints would put up a ferocious fight against legislation that would result in the right to practice polygamy. (Rocky Mountain Empire, p. 104)

The intent of the Mormon practice of plural marriage was to raise up large families--as the Bible says, "children are an heritage of the Lord" and "happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." (Psalm 127:3, 5) But today the prevention of children through birth control and abortion seem to be the rule rather than the exception. We live in a very strange society when "the penalty for taking or destroying an eagle's egg is \$5,000 and a year in jail, but the penalty for taking an unborn child's life is nothing." (Las Vegas Review-Journal, March 14, 1990) Eagles are protected by law, but our Government subsidizes the killing of unborn children.

Commonplace immorality does not seem to bother very many people. For instance, one of the most famous singers of all time confessed that he "had made love to not less than 3,000 ladies." (Julio Iglesias, Ladies Home Journal, Aug. 1985, p. 69) The Government has not sought to prosecute him. There have been no warrants out for him nor the thousands like him. The general public seems to envy rather than condemn those promiscuous lifestyles.

We have had a United States president that practically had a revolving door on his bedroom for the benefit of his mistresses, but they have named airports, streets, and memorials in his honor.

[13] However, let a man take two or more women as wives, honor them and their children, and provide for them in the State of Utah, and that man is considered a felon!

But the LDS Church is now facing the grim temporal consequences of abolishing plural marriage among its members. One example is found in the statistics revealed from a 1989 BYU survey:

The old statistics were grim enough. But the more recent statement given at this year's BYU Education Week seems even more

dismal: For those older than the regular marrying age in the Church, there are 14 Melchizedek Priesthood holders for every 100 women! (Utah County Journal, Church News, Oct. 14, 1989, p. 13, by Cheryl Higginson)

In retrospect, then, the point should be made that when Joseph Smith first revealed the law of plural marriage, it was a law of the Priesthood and was practiced separate and apart from the organized LDS Church. After the Church gave up this principle in 1890, this law continued as an eternal Priesthood law. This is an explanation of why so many of the Church leaders continued advocating and living it after the Manifesto.

Conclusion

Entire books could be, and have been, written on each of these three important subjects, but hopefully sufficient information has been presented here to show that our political, economic and social views have changed radically in the past 100 years.

* Instead of opposition from the U.S. Government, we have incorporated with them.

[14] * Instead of a Mormon united economic order, we are competing for federal dollars.

* Instead of the lifestyle of the prophets, we enforce the marriage laws of the Roman Caesars.

Are we any closer to the Kingdom of God now than 100 years ago? Are we any closer to living the United Order? Could we ever encourage our children to obey the law of plural marriage? If the Prophet Joseph Smith should visit us today, would he be proud of what we have done with his restoration of the eternal Gospel?

We have wanted to convert the world--but actually they seem to be converting us! In order to have peace with the world, during the past century we have abandoned many of the principles and doctrines restored by Joseph Smith. In addition to the three mentioned in this paper, there are many others, such as:

- * the literal gathering of Israel
- * missionary work without purse or scrip
- * blood atonement
- * doctrines of the Godhead
- * "Thus saith the Lord" revelations

It might be appropriate to compare our situation to the old fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast. Remember when Beauty embraced the Beast and it suddenly turned into a handsome prince? Well, Mormonism is embracing the Beast, but instead of its turning into something wonderful and handsome, Mormonism is in danger of being transformed into the image of the beast!

But all is not lost! There are at least 13 different prophecies foretelling about a portion of this people to be called to redeem Zion. A prophecy by Brigham Young stated:

[15] God will preserve a portion of this people, of the meek and the humble, to bear off the kingdom to the inhabitants of the earth, and will defend His Priesthood; for it is the last time, the last gathering time. (Contributor 10:362)

At that time the eternal laws of the United Order, Kingdom of God, and plural marriage will be accepted and practiced as God intended.

It is an honor to have been a participant in this conference. I'm grateful to the M.H.A. board members for this opportunity. Thank you very much.

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